

## Covenant

*The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.*

For at least ten years, the congregation I served in Cleveland, OH, could recite from memory what is known as “the Blake Covenant”: *Love is the spirit of this church, and service its law.*

*This is our great covenant: To dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another.* Shortly after the covenant was introduced as part of the weekly liturgy, there were a small group who wanted to change “covenant” to “promise,” thus avoiding the overtly religious associations with the word covenant. Yet, after some spirited debate, keeping the word “covenant” intact won the day.

This friendly debate about the word “covenant” belies a deeper struggle that goes back to the founding of what ultimately became the Unitarian Universalist Association. UU identity is founded on the notion that we covenant together, rather than share a single creed. In her six-session 2002-2001 Minns lecture, Alice Blair Wesley centers her lectures around the fact that our ancestors not only created a covenantal faith, which is the basis for how we organize ourselves, but they held love as the central and compelling act that defines everything else we, that is, “the church” does. Wesley writes this:

*The covenantal organizational pattern of the free church was the key element of our ancestor’s doctrine of the free church. It is a doctrine grounded in an understanding of how the power of mutual love deepens and works among individuals in free religious groups. That is, in free religious groups loyal, before all else, to the spirit of love.*

When new members join the church, we don’t ask them to sign a creedal statement of belief, but to express their sympathy with a covenantal faith. In other words, the church acknowledges that membership in the free church is open to individuals willing to sign a covenant — or promise — to be together, insofar as they are able, as a beloved community. And this is no simple matter.

Indeed. Living in covenant can be *hard*. When there aren’t enough teachers for religious education; when the board can’t find any candidates; when the stewardship campaign falls short or when disappointments pierce us through, we are forced to consider what this word means to us. It carries with it both the opportunity for disappointment and disillusion. How we live out these covenantal expectations in word and deed are baked into the promises we make to one another. Again, quoting Wesley: “Ultimately, the only freedom adequate to human dignity is the freedom to do what love asks of us.”<sup>1</sup>

And what does love ask of us? We understand that working only for our personal improvement and individual salvation can never be enough. Instead, like Clarence Skinner, a Unitarian theologian of the early twentieth century, we accept that we are “enmeshed in a world of humanity” from which we cannot disentangle ourselves. We are “part of the marvelous solidarity of life” and “must work out the salvation of the world” as well as our own. In community, we are saved and we can begin to save each other. Despite our mistrust and fears, we know we need each other, and that

the world needs our community. None of this is easy. Poet Wendell Berry warns that making a promise is always a leap into uncertainty. “We cannot join ourselves to one another without giving our word,” he says. “And this must be an unconditional giving, for in joining ourselves to another we join ourselves to the unknown.” He adds that “you do not know the road; you have committed your life to a way.” By leaping into the unknown, something more than the sum of our parts gets created.

Covenanting reveals our humanity in all its broken beauty, resting on the notion that we will keep trying, that we will remain engaged, that we will “come, yet again come” to the people and places that sustain us and draw out our best selves. Like so much of Unitarian Universalism, covenant is an aspirational goal, with perfection always out of reach. We will fail, make mistakes, need forgiveness. Yet how can we not try? Binding ourselves to a covenant keeps us awake to the values and qualities that sustain our lives. Covenanting with others is a sacred practice, a promise written on the hearts of others, a vow to join ourselves to the “marvelous solidarity of life.”

*By Rev. Kathleen Rolenz,  
until the theme team resumes  
for next month’s theme*

<sup>1</sup>Wesley, Alice Blair. Minns Lecture, 2000-2001.

### Covenant Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme please see this month’s Spiritual Practice Packet available online at <https://bit.ly/covenantpractice>.



## View from the Transit Lounge

**Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Interim Senior Minister**

Greetings, Unity Church! As I write this, I am sitting in the Toronto-Pearson Airport after visiting my in-laws in Gimli, Manitoba. We are in that liminal space found in all airports — in between one place and another. This transit lounge pretty much represents life as it is for many of us in August as summer ends and the new beginnings of the fall season appear on our horizon. Next week I will have to discern for

the seventh time in six years what to move into a new apartment!!

This airport transit lounge is an excellent place to remind myself that I made a choice to specialize in transitions! After serving a congregation as co-minister in Cleveland, OH, for sixteen years, I realized that it was these liminal times, the times in-between settled ministers that were calling me as the next horizon in my own ministry. Far from being merely a placeholder, an interim time brings with it a unique set of tasks and challenges for a congregation and their interim minister.

I know that as of this spring, Unity Church had hoped *not* to be entering into another time that may feel to some of you like a long layover in an airport transit lounge. Although every new leader changes the existing system just by their presence, there is a sense of relief when church's finally call their next "permanent" minister. However, I challenge the notion of "permanence," because if we fully embrace the wisdom offered to us from Buddhism, nothing is permanent. It's the illusion of permanence that we want to cling to. All ministers are, in some sense, interims. Likewise, there is no fixed or permanent church. Membership is fluid and flows, as new members join and others resign, as children grow and our beloveds leave through distance or death.

Intellectually we know this, but emotionally and spiritually, sometimes we have to wait for our souls to catch up. That's part of what I do as an interim minister; I hold space for our souls to grieve the leave-takings; to celebrate the miracles of life both great and small and to remind myself and others of how to navigate the waters of transition with as much grace and grit as we can muster.

There is work ahead, indeed. We'll continue to work on the developmental tasks of an interim period that you had some time to engage with last year with Rev. Kathy Hurt. One of my early tasks will involve creating covenants with my colleagues on the Executive Team, with Rev. Karen Gustafson and with your Minister Emerita, Rev. Janne Eller-Issacs. Creating these covenants between us provide an opportunity for us to describe what we want and need from one another to be in a healthy and productive relationship.

I'll be so glad when I can get out of this transit lounge and actually arrive in St. Paul! I look forward to experiencing the vibrancy and dynamism both the congregation and the city. My husband and I have visited the Twin Cities on many occasions and love its diversity, its rich cultural and artistic opportunities, the natural beauty of Minnesota and the many fine colleagues and friends we have in the area. Although this opportunity for ministry was unexpected, I feel a deep sense of being called to Unity's interim ministry at this time of transition in your — and my own — life. I'm looking forward to meeting you, worshipping with you, engaging in spiritual practices with you and embarking on this journey of faith together. But right now — I gotta go! — they are calling my flight!!

## The Wheel of Life

### In Memoriam

**Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs**

November 7, 1951 - July 23, 2022

See page 4 for details about the memorial service.

**Garl Rieke**

1942-2022

### In Celebration

**Sadie Katherine Obsfeld**

born one more redeemer on July 19, 2022, to parents Jared and Shelby Miller Obstfeld. Great grandparents Denny and Carol Miller are thrilled to welcome another great grandchild.

# SUNDAY SERVICES / OFFERING RECIPIENTS

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## September Worship Services

*Beginning Sunday, September 11, we will return to two in-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. The 9:00 a.m. service will be offered via livestream.*

### September 4: Our Work

Rev. Ruth MacKenzie

Livestream at 10:00 a.m.: <https://youtu.be/J8IRhV0o6zQ>

What is the connection between work and our spiritual lives? What covenants can we make with ourselves and one another to bring the holy into the whole of our lives, including our work, regardless of what we do or how we labor? Join Rev. Ruth MacKenzie and several members of our community this Labor Day Sunday as we speak in a collage of perspectives and life experiences about the intersections of our work and our loves, our values and our spiritual labors.

### September 11: *The Same River Twice*

#### Merging of Waters and Ritual of Transition

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

Livestream at 9:00 a.m.: <https://youtu.be/fhJL-pedu8E>

This Sunday marks the beginning of the church year and the launch of September's theme of covenant. Covenants both mark a new beginning and affirm long-standing values, hopes and dreams for the present and future. Our first Sunday "back" after summer services will include a ritual of ingathering with the merging of waters and an acknowledgement of the next chapter of interim ministry. Please bring water you have collected over the summer for the merging ritual.

September 11 is a Family Sunday, with children experiencing the entire worship together with their families in the Sanctuary. A story for all ages and activity books related to the stories and sermon help children to engage in the experience of worship.

### September 18: *And to Think I Heard it on Berry Street*

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

Livestream at 9:00 a.m.: <https://youtu.be/Xe2vSGLumsQ>

Wait — isn't that a line from a Dr. Seuss book about "Mulberry Street?" Yes, the title is adapted from Dr. Seuss, but the sermon will be about all the diverse characters and insights UU's have encountered on "Berry Street," the name of the oldest continuous lecture series in America. The 2022 Berry Street lecture by Rev. Mykal Slack in particular offered us an important challenge to re-examine our covenants and our culture.

### September 25: *Disappointment: The Unwelcome Partner in the Dance of Expectation*

Rev. Karen Gustafson

Livestream at 9:00 a.m.: <https://youtu.be/Q8mQV89al8o>

## September Offering Recipients

*Each week, seventy percent of our Sunday offering is given to a community non-profit and thirty percent supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church. Donations are gratefully accepted online at <https://bit.ly/sundayoffering>.*

### September 4: Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition

Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABSHC), founded in 2011, provides resources to assist those living with the trauma resulting from forced enrollment in church-run boarding schools. NABSHC partners with faith denominations involved in these schools to break the silence and begin the healing from the generational social, emotional, spiritual, and cultural devastation resulting from stripping native children of their identity and their voice. This collection will support the dissemination of its comprehensive trauma-informed curricula. Unity's Becky Gonzalez-Campoy is a non-tribal member of NABSHC working with Unity's Indigenous Justice Team.

### September 11: Freshwater

Freshwater is a public non-profit that is dedicated to preserving freshwater resources and their surrounding watersheds through programs and science-based policy work that equips individuals and communities to take their next steps in protecting and preserving our freshwater resources. Unity Church member Rebecca Flood is a Freshwater fan!

### September 18: Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School

Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School serves 250 children in grades pre-K through 5. The core of Obama School revolves around a commitment to provide a collaborative system of whole-community support aimed to inspire and guide each scholar toward academic and social achievement. This collection will bolster the principal's Sunshine Fund which supports both staff and scholars with expanded learning opportunities. Unity's Obama School Ministry Team is a strong voice for the Obama School community.

### September 25: Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute

Planting People, Growing Justice Leadership Institute (PPGJLI) aims to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and community outreach. Approximately 85% of children in the juvenile justice system are not literate. PPGJLI uses its arts and humanities education program to guide and inspire students to improve their literacy skills through school visits, reading-aloud events, and the placing of over 7,000 culturally diverse books into the hands of young readers. Several Unity Church members are tireless supporters of this locally grown education outreach.

# PASTORAL AND CONGREGATIONAL CARE



## By Way of Introduction

**Rev. Karen Gustafson**  
Interim Minister of Pastoral Care

Some time in January of 1984, I found myself standing in someone's living room somewhere in St. Paul facing a circle of strangers who wanted to know about my interest in being a ministerial intern at Unity Church—Unitarian. The process was inelegant, at best, but my memory is that those present expressed kind and genuine interest in what I thought I might bring to Unity Church as well as what they might offer to me. It seemed like a fair question. I had recently considered submitting a personals ad (the primitive 1980's equivalent to match.com) that read:

"Slightly overweight, over educated, underemployed, 38 year old single mother of three children under ten with a \$5,000 college loan, seeks suitable companion."

I admit now that I remember the question better than I do the answer. I must have had the good sense to lead with my assets rather than my liabilities because the deal got sealed. I arrived on July 1, moved my children and a nanny into two rooms at the Buggs' house on Ashland Avenue and myself, my typewriter (!) and a few files into a desk in the library at Unity which was to be my office for the next six months.

The story of that time has, for nearly forty years now, continued to offer its gifts. It has been a source of humility and compassion, of sharp insight and deep appreciation, of gratitude and grace and transformation. The anchoring threads of that time have become woven into each and all of my subsequent ministry.

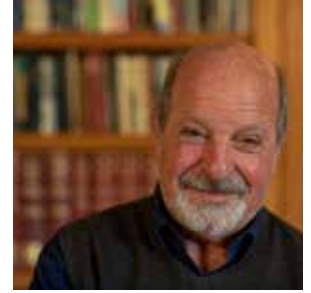
It is the question offered in that long ago living room that still holds the continuing promise of Unity's shared ministry. "What can we offer each other?" In this moment in the life of Unity Church, how are those offerings shaped and changed in the face of changing times and circumstances and how do we as individuals, as leaders and groups and communities remain resilient in the face of the inevitability of change? What can change teach us about who we are? How do we open ourselves to the gifts that this time offers?

I am delighted to have this opportunity to join with Rev. Kathleen and the rest of the Unity staff and with you all as we explore these questions together.

*Do you have a concern or joy you wish to have shared in Sunday worship? Would you like to request a call from the minister or a Care Associate? Can the Helping Hands program support you with meals, rides, or other assistance? Please let us know. Complete the online form: <https://www.unityunitarian.org/congregational-care.html>, email [pastoralcare@unityunitarian.org](mailto:pastoralcare@unityunitarian.org), or call 651-327-0790.*

## Memorial Service for Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs

A memorial service for Rev. Rob Eller Isaacs will be held on Saturday, September 17, 2022, at 3:00 p.m., at Unity Church. We know that this will be a very full service, so we are planning to host overflow seating in the Ames Chapel, Robbins Parlor, and Gannett Room. You may also livestream the service on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/CFBaFOjhiwU>. Currently, we are expecting Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs and family, plus many in and out-of-town guests, former interns, and ministerial colleagues to attend. Another service for Rob will be held in Portland, OR, on Saturday, September 10, 2022, at 3:00 p.m. Pacific Time, First Unitarian Portland (we will post the link online once we receive it).



Rob's influence on Unitarian Universalism in general and his ministry at Unity Church in particular was significant. His vision, his insistence on the centrality of worship and spiritual practice, his deep love of family, church and justice will all be both deeply missed and celebrated at Unity on September 17th. You can read more about Rev. Rob in his obituary in the Star Tribune (<https://bit.ly/robobitst>) and in a piece from the Pioneer Press (<https://bit.ly/robstorypp>).

The service will include a collage of voices drawn from those who knew and loved Rob. If you have a remembrance to contribute, send it by email to [unity@unityunitarian.org](mailto:unity@unityunitarian.org). All remembrances will be shared with Rob's family even if it is not possible to share them all during the service.

Unity's Executive Team is also in discussion about creating opportunities for members to gather, either virtually or in person, to remember Rev. Rob and all that he brought to this church and to Unitarian Universalism. Look in upcoming weekly emails for more current updates about these opportunities.

We send our love and blessings to Janne, Jonah, Jessie and Hannah, as well as their spouses and children, who continue to love — to remember — and to grieve.

**commUNITY** is the newsletter of Unity Church—Unitarian. It is published monthly. Deadlines are the 15th of each month. Subscriptions are free to those who make pledges to Unity Church and are available to others for \$30 per year. Unity Church—Unitarian  
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# WELCOME NEWCOMERS



## Welcome Words

**Laura Park, Director of Membership and Hospitality**

If you've been visiting Unity Church in the summer, you'll see several changes in church programming in September.

- We return to two services at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 11.
- Sunday, September 11, will include a beautiful ritual we call the Merging of the Waters, with children and families in the sanctuary for this Family Sunday. Bring water to church that you've collected during the summer, whether from travels afar or the tap in your kitchen, and we will merge them in celebration of coming together again in community. After the service, we boil and filter the water and use it to bless our babies and in other rituals.
- Finding Yourself at Unity goes back to 10:15 a.m. on September 11, between the two services.
- We return to our regular children's Religious Education programming, with classes beginning September 18. Please contact Ray Hommeyer ([ray@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ray@unityunitarian.org)) for more information on how to register your children.
- Wellspring Wednesday (see page 8) returns every Wednesday evening on September 14. Join us for fellowship and to deepen our life of faith together.
- Choir rehearsals begin again. See page 15 for more information about our music ministry and how to get involved.
- Chalice Circles return. See page 9 for more information on how to register for this meaningful exploration of our monthly worship themes.
- You'll see more people at church! Many people tell me the change of energy this brings surprises them—it often feels like a completely different church. Know that we're still the same at core, just more of us together.

Need more information to navigate the shift into fall? I'm here to help answer your questions about congregational life and the pathways you might explore to know the church better and deepen your spiritual life. Contact me at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x110.

I look forward to meeting you!

## Pathway to Membership Classes

Explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. Contact Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x110 with questions or to participate.

**Finding Yourself at Unity • Sundays • 10:15 a.m.**

**Gannett Room in-person and online at [bit.ly/fyuonline](https://bit.ly/fyuonline)**

Finding Yourself at Unity includes eight classes that you can attend in any order to better understand how Unity Church supports our faith journeys, our work to build Beloved Community, and our efforts to bless the world. Topics include: UU History; Faith Formation for Children, Youth, and Adults; Congregational and Pastoral Care; Q & A with a Minister; Worship & the Liturgical Year; Social Justice & Community Outreach; Membership 101 & Congregational Life, and a Building Tour. This month's offerings:

September 4: No class

September 11: Unitarian Universalist History

September 18: Building Tour

September 25: Religious Education

### Committing to Unity

**Thursday, October 27 • 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. • Unity Church**

- *Develop personal practice to help you find and keep your balance.*
- *Develop the skills of intimacy that let you go deep quickly with strangers.*
- *Take the compassion that rises from doing the first two and use it to bless the world.*

This is how Unity Church talks about its expectations of membership. Does the invitation into this ongoing work resonate with you? Are you ready to make the membership commitment? This session, for people ready to become members, explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. It offers time to reflect on the meaning of generosity and how you can discover the places in your life where the world's need meets the gifts and joy you have to offer. The class concludes with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book and officially join the church.

## Mentoring at Unity

### *A Deeper Path to Connection*

Would you welcome having a guide to congregational life at Unity Church? Request a mentor! Your mentor will meet with you at least once a month face-to-face and be available for ongoing questions and advice. You can decide together what connection would be most helpful. You might attend Sunday services together or meet to discuss Unitarian Universalism and your spiritual journeys, or attend a church event together, or find another way to connect. Each pair makes a commitment to work together for at least six months. Contact Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) for more information.



## Gratitude for this Community

Mary Hernandez, Trustee

It's been a difficult stretch of time at Unity Church. In times like this, I find it a constructive spiritual practice to reflect on and name the things I am grateful for. I don't have to dig too deep to be overcome with gratitude

for a multitude of things about this community. Certainly this is not an exhaustive list, but these are the things that rise to the top today. Here goes!

I am grateful for:

- Holding space together to grieve and love our beloved Janne and Rob, their long-term ministry to our church, and collectively hold the grief our community is experiencing with the passing of Rob.
- The ongoing efforts the congregation is making to engage with each other across differences, to understand one another, heal, and begin again to figure out who we are together.
- Continuing to show up as we are able, as well as stepping back and taking care of ourselves when we need some space.
- Our ongoing commitment to dismantle white supremacy and create a multicultural spiritual home.
- Our youth, who lend us their energy, optimism, bright minds and fun.
- Fellow trustees, who are deeply committed to maintaining the health of this community, and to members who have submitted applications to join the board in the coming cycle.
- Our wonderful executive team, for their ongoing ministry to the congregation as a whole, as well as to each of us as individuals.
- Our dedicated and talented staff and our many volunteers for their hard work to keep everything up and running.
- Welcoming our new interim ministers Rev. Kathleen Rolenz and Rev. Karen Gustafson, to help guide us through this next phase of transition.
- New members, who have joined us in this time of uncertainty and transition. Welcome!

There is an abundance to be grateful for at Unity Church, and this list gives me an enormous sense of *hope* for our future together! I look forward to moving into this next season with you all.

## Change, Conflict, and Complexity: Antidotes and Spiritual Practices



**THIS EVENT HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 2023.**

**Registration:** <https://bit.ly/changeconflictcomplexity>

For more and more of us taking next steps into antiracist practices and expanding intercultural capacities, the increasing complexity of this work is everywhere present about us — within, among, and beyond. There is no overlooking, evading, or simplifying this complexity as it is nothing other than the disquieting complexity of ourselves. And for those committed to this deep work, who expect to complexify this work, we invite you to register for this fall training event with Team Dynamics. We will find ways to be present to change, creatively engage conflict, and create brave space where complexity serves as fertile ground for learning and shaping change together.

As one who wrote, spoke, and wrestled incessantly with the complexity of racism in the soul of America, James Baldwin insisted, "Complexity is our only safety and love is the only key to our maturity." A love that refuses simplistic definitions and illusions of safety promoted by our dominant culture. A love more perceptive to our battling instincts, assumptions, and beliefs that vie for position and power, even weaponizing antiracist tools like "characteristics of white supremacy culture" (Tema Okun, [teamdynamicsmn.com/blog/white-dominant-culture-by-tema-okun](https://teamdynamicsmn.com/blog/white-dominant-culture-by-tema-okun)) to accuse, shame, blame and perpetuate disconnection. But what are the antidotes and spiritual practices that can revive complexity in a time of false simplicities? How can we complicate the narrative and keep it from collapsing into that us/them binary? How do we wade into the messiness to achieve conflicts and truer conversations worthy of our humanity? If trust precedes facts, how can we claim a deeper covenant with one another that opens an alternate way to truths, tensions, conflicts, mutual care, and possibilities into the future?

We hope you will join us as we further our collaboration with Team Dynamics in deepening intercultural capacity across our ministry areas. We will build on practices and touch the complexities at the heart of our antiracist multicultural work.



# ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

## Lester Mayers at Unity Church: Artist in Residence

**Lia Rivamonte, Beloved Community Communications and Artist in Residence Teams**

Lester Eugene Mayers (pronouns: anything that comes from a respectful place) will be Unity's Artist in Residence through November. He is a poet, playwright, actor, director, and performance artist. During his residency, Lester will contribute to the commUNITY newsletter, participate in worship services, and conduct a Wellspring Wednesday learning session. His residency will culminate in an original performance work of music, movement, and spoken word presented at Unity in November. Say "Hey" to the artist if you see him in the hallway — his dynamic presence will be unmistakable.

"They say in the beginning was the word, and the word was god and I thought if god won't listen, I'd hope he'd read."

Those are the first words of Lester's performance work, "Poems From a Shelter," produced by the Ambience Theatre Company at Dreamland Arts in St. Paul in July. Words are the architecture for Lester's art, and serves as the main medium for his visceral, unvarnished, yet luscious revelatory work. A choreopoem (defined by Lester as "the language, the text within music, and the physical dance accompanying it into one room"), "Poems From a Shelter," was written, directed, and performed by the artist. It takes place overnight in a homeless shelter, and consists of nine poems interspersed with statistical information about queer Black people who are homeless.

Homelessness is a situation he has known many times over in the course of his life. As Lester has said, he doesn't write from distance. "I live or have lived everything I write about — and when I get up on that stage, I relive everything but trust the word to bring me back."

As a boy growing up in Brooklyn, New York, Lester, parentless and unschooled until age seven, did not speak, much less read. But a teacher took him under her wing and taught him how to read and write by word association. She read him a poem by Maya Angelou, he told me, and together they sounded out each letter, each word, and discussed it. Through that practice and the memorization of poems, he learned to love language. Since that early time, Angelou has continued to be a source of inspiration.

Poems come to him when he does as the sage poet instructed: *Close your eyes, sit still, and listen.* Lester's writing comes from deeply listening to himself, and the world around him, with an implicit trust that words — specifically the Black vernacular that is at the root of his work — will express what he feels, what he knows to be true.

Lester's gift with words, and his consummate performance skills have brought him accolades, awards, and many exciting opportunities. He is in Minnesota as a Playwrights' Center Many Voices Fellow, and will soon be serving as Assistant Director at The Guthrie for "Sally & Tom," the premiere of a new play by Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks, opening October 1. *SoMad* in New York City will produce his solo work, "Mark My Words," in November.

Sapphire, the author of "Push," has written the foreword for Lester's play, "Swallow From Both Ends," to be published in February. It is the first piece he has written exclusively for theater. Even so, Lester professed frustration that no one, thus far, has said they will produce the play. "Theaters," he said, "are limited by the 'taste purveyors.' The play is too real," he continued, "I've been told that it's beautiful but because it's written from the queer Black gaze, and in Black vernacular, there's no way in. I say it's because their (mainstream theater producers) own pedagogy doesn't give them a way in — there is no way for others to engage."

"Where are the spaces that we can carve for ourselves without asking permission?" he asked rhetorically. Bristling, he referred to James Baldwin's question, "How much time do you want



for your progress?" (James Baldwin: *The Price of the Ticket*: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCUIE5ldPvM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCUIE5ldPvM)) In the meantime, he said, "I will keep producing with the resources I can find."

Lester thinks a lot about something else Baldwin has said as impetus for his own work, "An artist is not free to do what they want to do, but free to do what they have to do." When asked when he first knew he was an artist, Lester responded, "When did I know I was Black?"

This unassailable connection between one's identity and the creative process is illuminated in Baldwin's 1962 essay, *The Creative Process*, "An artist is a sort of emotional or spiritual historian. His role is to make you realize the doom and glory of knowing who you are and what you are. He has to tell, because nobody else in the world can tell, what it is like to be alive." (*The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1945-1985*)

"Poems From a Shelter" ends with a prayer: "Dear god, send me you by my own definition, a poem that can walk on water, turn itself into wine, and then a teacher, that can learn me to see that I've been loved all along."

Watch for opportunities to experience Lester's work, and keep listening.

# WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Wellspring Wednesday gathers a multigenerational church community to nourish right and holy relationship among us and deepen our life of faith, grounded in spiritual practice and antiracist multicultural work. The weekly experience includes:

- Sharing meaningful time and nourishing food together.
- Brief multigenerational worship.
- Opportunities to play, learn, and practice with one another.

5:45 p.m.: Dinner is \$8/adult, \$4/child, \$20 max/family (financial support is available by email to [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org)).

6:40 p.m.: Multigenerational chapel service in the Ames Chapel

7:10-8:30 p.m.: Weekly programs with childcare provided. See September programs below!

## September 14

*Dinner: Shepherd's pie, salad, dessert*

### **Medicine Year by Thomas R. Smith**

#### **Twin Cities Book Launch**

In-person, Parish Hall

Online via Zoom, register here:

<https://bit.ly/TRSmithUnity>

You are invited to the Twin Cities book launch of *Medicine Year* with internationally known poet and Loft instructor,



Thomas R. Smith. *Medicine Year* is a record in poems of 2020, a year in which, for the poet and his wife, personal crises coincided with the coronavirus pandemic in a medical "perfect storm." But *Medicine Year* is fundamentally not about illness or pandemic but about health and being alive in times that deplete our physical and emotional resources. Books will be for sale from SubText Books and book signing will follow reading.

### **Medical Aid in Dying**

In-person, Robbins Parlor

Join Rev. Harlan Limpert and Dr. Rebecca Thoman to learn about legislation for Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD.) MAiD legislation, already passed in 20 states, is connected to Unitarian values, allowing MAiD for people who are over the age of 18, terminally ill, and deemed mentally capable by medical experts. Those attending who are interested in forming a group to support passage of MAiD legislation in Minnesota will consider next steps. Questions? Email Marty Rossmann at [rossm001@umn.edu](mailto:rossm001@umn.edu).

## September 21

*Dinner: Chili and baked potato night*

### **The Golden Rule with Veterans for Peace**

In-person, Robbins Parlor

Learn how the Golden Rule sailboat helped stop nuclear weapons testing in the 1950s and how she continues to fight the possibility of nuclear war today. The Golden Rule is beginning her "Great Loop" journey in the Twin Cities, educating the public on our role in diminishing the prospect of nuclear war. On this International Peace Day, Golden Rule Project Director Helen Jacquard and congregant Mike McDonald will invite us into the Golden Rule's work for peace.

### **Antiracism Literacy Partners Fall 2022**

Online via Zoom, register here: <https://bit.ly/ALPSep2022>

What does it take to be racially literate, and engaged in antiracism as faith work or as a spiritual practice? This program, offered each quarter, will highlight useful books, podcasts, and videos in our ongoing practice of learning about systemic racism and the work of dismantling it. Participants report that their understanding of a resource increases exponentially when explored with a partner or a group. Come to choose a resource, sign up for a buddy or small group and make plans for your discussions. Resource/discussion guides provided. Questions? Email Becky Gonzalez-Campoy at [beckygc83@gmail.com](mailto:beckygc83@gmail.com).

### **Board Game Night**

In-person, Center Room

Open to everyone; kids are welcome with their adult(s)! We'll have a variety of board games available for ages 10 and up that are easy to learn, or bring a favorite board game that you would like to play. Bring a board game for the younger set, too, if an adult comes with it to facilitate the game.

## September 28

*Dinner: Stuffed shells, chopped salad, dessert*

### **Indigenous History in Minnesota**

#### **Truth Telling and Healing Indigenous and Environmental Justice Series**

Come join us to kick off this Truth Telling and Healing monthly series (see page 11 for more information), by grounding yourself in the truth of the history of the native peoples of this area, the Minnesota Ojibwe and Dakota. With this foundation, you will have context for later sessions, which will delve into the details of exploitation, displacement, and other injustices dealt by settlers upon our region's Indigenous peoples. You will learn how native peoples went from possessing all our state's land to now being reduced into a few native communities and reservations. You will understand how the settlers and their institutions justified this land-taking and economic exploitation, and the methods they used to do so. You will leave with resources you can use later for your own "truth" journey. This session, led by and developed in collaboration with Indigenous leaders, will also include stories from ministry team members of facing the truth of the history and legacy of native peoples.



# FAITH FORMATION / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

## Sign up for a Chalice Circle

Chalice Circles offer a way to connect with a small group of Unity Church members through the spiritual practice of guided conversation. The circles are designed to nurture spiritual growth through deep sharing, disciplined listening, and heartfelt appreciation for what each participant has to share.



*It was a wonderful experience. Often challenging, often enlightening.*

— Craig Cox

*Such a great experience — I can't wait to start again!*

— Tara Tieso

Participating is easy.

1. Visit [bit.ly/Circles22-23](https://bit.ly/Circles22-23) and choose a day and time that fits your schedule.
2. Engage with the Spiritual Practices packet, explore a suggested practice, and then reflect on the questions. Check out this month's packet to get an idea of what to expect: <https://bit.ly/covenantpractice>.
3. Join your Chalice Circle to connect with others while engaging with each month's theme.

## Dine with Nine Returns

Register by September 20!

Want to enjoy conversation, food, and fellowship with fellow Unity Church members and friends? Enjoy meeting new faces and/or renewing prior acquaintances? Like extending the hospitality of Unity's community in a personal way? Dine with Nine is for you!



Beginning in October, small groups (approximately nine per group) of Unity Church members and friends will gather once a month for food and fellowship. Each group is self-directed and will choose the dates, times, and locations for their gatherings. Often, these are potluck meals in group members' homes, but groups may also choose to mix in visits to restaurants, a picnic, or a catered/delivered meal. When you register, you can request a brunch, dinner, or family group, and let us know if you have other requests or requirements.

Visit the Dine with Nine table in the Parish Hall on September 11 and 18 to learn more and sign up. Online sign-up is available at <https://www.unityunitarian.org/dine-with-nine.html>. Please register no later than September 20 and complete the form in its entirety. Questions? Contact Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x110. We look ahead to another great year of Dine with Nine!

## A Spiritual Practice to Feed Your Soul: Lectio Divina

Register: <https://bit.ly/lectio22-23>

Meet online to share in our ongoing offering of Lectio Divina. Following a centuries-old Benedictine spiritual practice of contemplative reading, a chosen poem is read aloud, as attendees are encouraged to lift up what they heard and how the poem spoke to them. A rich way to receive poetry's gifts in a small group setting. Join us from 7:00-8:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the month (beginning September 27) or the second Wednesday (beginning October 12) on Zoom. Register once, at any time, to attend any or all sessions. Led by Lisa Wersal or Shelley Butler.

## Fellowship Groups

For more conversation about getting connected, contact Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org).

**Afterthoughts** offers time immediately following the 9:00 service to discuss the service.

**Caregivers Group** meets on the third Thursday of the month.

**Evergreen Quilters:** This quilting group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month.

**Families Living with Mental Health Challenges** meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**Living With Grief Group** meets on the third Tuesday of the month.

**Men's Breakfast Group** meets monthly on the first Saturday for breakfast from 8:30-10:00 a.m.

**Men's Coffee Group** meets every other Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation.

**Men's Conversation Group** meets Monday, September 5 and 19, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Men's Retirement Circle:** Monday, September 12 and 26, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

**New Look at the Bible** meets the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

**Recovery from White Conditioning** meets Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m.

**Textile Arts Group** meets online the first and third Wednesday of each month from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc.

**Unity Book Club** meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. September 13 discussion: *Search: A Novel* by Michelle Huneven

**Women in Retirement** meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month and will begin meeting in-person again on September 22, from 1:00-3:00 p.m., in the Center Room. Social hour at noon!

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

## Obama School Team A New School Year

As we get ready for a new school year at Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School, we're sharing how you can help support the scholars and staff.

**We're now recruiting volunteers to work one-on-one with scholars on their reading and math skills, and others to work in the library.** If you have volunteered with the school in recent years, you should be receiving our emails. If you would like to learn more and possibly join the volunteers, please contact Karen Abraham at [kabe1260@gmail.com](mailto:kabe1260@gmail.com). Our first quarterly meeting for volunteers (and potential volunteers) will be Sunday, September 18, after the second service. Join us at noon, upstairs in the Foote Room.

**Calling all former students of Saint Paul's Webster Magnet School (now Barack and Michelle Obama School) and family members!!** This will be the last year of the school building as it's currently configured. Beginning next June, the school will close for two years of renovation and transition to a new school, still bearing the Obama name. In the meantime, this year is also the 100th anniversary of the school building, and plans are underway to celebrate. We'd like *you* to be in on the celebrations! If you or members of your family were students at Webster, please contact Nancy Heege at [nancyheege672@gmail.com](mailto:nancyheege672@gmail.com) so we can keep you informed about opportunities.

**On September 18 the Sunday offering will be shared with Obama School — please give generously!**

## Gun Sense Team Join Our Work for Sensible Gun Laws

Unity's Gun Sense Team is a cohesive group with passion for preventing gun violence and advocating for gun safety matters in our community. We have chosen to work in partnership with Moms Demand Action (a concerned citizens organization) and Protect Minnesota (a statewide lobbying group). We feel the work of our team is critical and urgent, and we invite your participation. During this election season, we encourage all to become well-informed about the candidates' positions on gun safety, and then show up at the polls!

Every other Sunday, beginning September 11, the Gun Sense Team will host a table following services in the Parish Hall. Come learn more! Please feel welcome to attend our next meeting on Thursday, September 8, 4:30-5:30 p.m., in the Gannett Room and online via Zoom.

## Evergreen Quilters A Big Thank You

Unity's Evergreen Quilters are grateful for your continued support over the years. Last April, we held our biennial quilt sale and thanks to your generous purchases, one hundred percent of the money raised was shared with our community partners. Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf, Project Home, and The Jeremiah Program each received \$1,075.00!! These partners do important work in building beloved community and we are honored and humbled to be able to support them through your generous contributions and our art.

This fall you will have another opportunity to help our neighbors with the purchase of a raffle ticket for a "one of a kind" bed sized quilt. The quilt is called "Gather the Stars" based on a Carl Sandburg poem by that name, and was hung in the Sanctuary for the celebration of life for Martha Eaves, a co-founder of Evergreen Quilters who died this year. Watch for information about how to purchase a raffle ticket (or two!).

## Affordable Housing Team Housing Conversation with Gubernatorial Candidates

**Tuesday, September 13  
7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**Details and registration:**  
<https://bit.ly/beacongov>

Minnesota's housing crisis needs immediate and impactful action. The state of Minnesota and the Governor have a crucial leadership role in setting a bold vision forward.

Organizations, including Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, from across the housing continuum are sponsoring the event. We look forward to hearing what candidates for Governor have to say about their vision for home. Issues to be covered include homelessness, housing instability, home ownership, and more.

Questions for the candidates will be crafted by a diverse group of housing stakeholders.



## Save the Date! Prairie Homeless Companion

**Friday, October 14  
7:00-9:00 p.m.**

**Details and registration:**  
<https://bit.ly/prairiehomeless>

This unique performance by zAmya Theater Group consists of actors who have experienced homelessness. They creatively and engagingly share real stories of homelessness beyond the stereotypes. The performance is followed by a dialogue between performers, Beacon staff, and local Beacon partners that provides information about housing insecurity, Beacon's approach, and real solutions.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

*Indigenous and Environmental Justice Series*

## Truth Telling and Healing

September 2022 – April 2023

Sponsored by Unity's Act for the Earth and the Indigenous Justice Community Outreach Ministry Teams

At the beginning of all our worship services and congregational events, we give a land acknowledgement, the last line of which states:

***We acknowledge the ongoing injustices that we have committed against the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations, and we wish to interrupt this legacy, beginning with acts of healing and honest storytelling about this place.***

This is a powerful statement. To begin our journey as a congregation to interrupt these injustices, the Act for the Earth Team has joined the Indigenous Justice Team in sponsoring a seven-part monthly series on Truth Telling and Healing. Indigenous spirituality and ways of life have included a deep connection to the earth since the beginning of time. We know that to save this planet, we need to learn from and join its indigenous populations, and in particular our state of Minnesota, to reconnect to the land.

We invite you all to this seven-part series that will be kicked off with a Wellspring Wednesday program on September 28 (see page 8). All programs will be offered in-person and online.

In the fall we will go deeper into acknowledging the injustices toward the Indigenous people of Minnesota, by learning about the painful history of which most of us only have a vague knowledge. We will begin the process of telling the truth and taking responsibility for our part in historical injustice and the complicity that continues into the present:

SEPTEMBER: Indigenous History in Minnesota (see page 8 for details)

OCTOBER: Relationship to Land: Treaties Made and Broken

NOVEMBER: The Role of Religion: Colonization, Missionary Work, Boarding Schools

Beginning in January 2023, we will learn about the language, cultural, and spiritual healing that is underway in the Dakota and Ojibwe nations and reveal the repair that is needed individually and within our congregation to interrupt the legacy of injustice:

JANUARY: Indigenous Healing: Language, Culture, and Spirituality

FEBRUARY: Land and Reparations

MARCH: Honoring the Treaties and Saving the Earth

APRIL: Our Part in Owning and Healing

We are collaborating with historians, Indigenous leaders, and activist organizations to create and deliver these sessions. Unitarian Universalist and Indigenous spirituality reflections and sharing will be included in all seven sessions.

Act for the Earth Team

Get Out the Vote

Kickoff Meeting

Tuesday, September 13 • 7:00 p.m.

Online via Zoom

Register: <https://bit.ly/GOTVsept>



This November, the Minnesota Governor's seat, all state Senate and Representative seats, and Minnesota seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are up for election. Issues that we as Unitarian Universalists care about — racial justice, climate change, gun violence, affordable housing, women's rights, LGBTQ equality, and fundamentally, our democracy itself — will be influenced or decided by future office holders.

Unity Church members are invited to help Get Out the Vote (GOTV)! Join us for a kickoff meeting via Zoom to learn why getting the vote out is important and how you can help.

Unity volunteers are coordinating GOTV efforts with our partners, the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Alliance, UU the Vote, and Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light. All volunteer work will be nonpartisan.

Join us to ensure everyone's voice is heard in the upcoming election. Questions? Contact Sherri Knuth at [SherriKnuth@gmail.com](mailto:SherriKnuth@gmail.com).

## Donate to the Food Shelf

Hallie Q. Brown needs our help more than ever. Our donation for the month of July totaled 109 pounds. Please continue to support bring items each week when possible. During September the food shelf needs pencils, backpacks, rulers, markers, crayons, notebooks, glue sticks, glue, tissues, general school supplies, and of course food is always welcome.



Donating money online is another good option. Just visit [hallieqbrown.org](http://hallieqbrown.org) and click on donate.



## A Great New Book and a Reminder to Submit to Cairns!

### Book Review (excerpt)

***Libertie: A Novel* by Kaitlyn Greenidge** (New York: Algonquin Publishing, 2021)  
[Read the entire book review here: <https://bit.ly/Libertie>]

*Libertie* is billed as historical fiction, but it is much more than that. Based on a true story of a free Black female doctor and her young adult daughter in Brooklyn, NY, during the second half of the 19th century, it is rooted in the U.S. Civil War and its aftermath. This is the story of a free, young Black woman, Libertie Sampson, who seeks true freedom.

Libertie, born a dark-skinned free Black woman, is the repository of her light-skinned mother's dreams. She sends her daughter to a Black college to study medicine, but Libertie learns she does not wish to be a doctor and is expelled from school because of her poor performance. She returns to Brooklyn, but neglects to tell her mother about her failure.

She discovers that her mother has taken on an assistant, a young Haitian doctor who woos Libertie and convinces her to marry him. After her marriage to the light-skinned Emmanuel, Libertie travels to Haiti with him to begin her new life in a Black country that she believes will allow her to spread her wings and become free. It doesn't turn out that way.

The importance of magical beliefs is a major thread of the story, especially when Libertie encounters Haitian voodoo, and the author leaves readers questioning the reality of Libertie's experiences. The book does not hesitate to reveal classism in the Black community that pits freeborn Blacks against those who escaped slavery.

Although the author does not shy away from uncomfortable facts, classism in the Black community that pits freeborn Blacks against those who escaped slavery, and questions, she tells the story beautifully and develops even minor characters fully.

**Readers who believe they don't like historical fiction should read *Libertie*. It will change their minds.**

— Louise Merriam, Library-Bookstall Team

For more great books, visit the **Unity Bookstall** and the **Unity Anderson Library** on Sunday mornings. Browse the library catalog online at [www.librarycat.org/lib/UnityChurch](http://www.librarycat.org/lib/UnityChurch).

## Reminder! Submit to Cairns: *The Unity Church Journal of the Arts* by September 26!

What's your story and medium? What is your take on things? How do you see the world? What unique point of view do you have? What are you passionate about? What vision of the ordinary or everyday life tells a story about you, or do you have an extraordinary story? Share it with our community by submitting to *Cairns*!

For more information on how and what to submit to *Cairns*, as well as the process of selection and editing, please visit the Cairns page on the Unity Church website: [www.unityunitarian.org/cairns.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/cairns.html).

## In The Justice Database



"A Mindful Approach to Race and Social Justice," video conversation with Rhonda Magee, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and Anderson Cooper. Find the link in the Justice Database. <https://bit.ly/JusticeData>.



# PARISH HALL ARTIST / GET CONNECTED

## September Parish Hall Artist

Linda Giesen



The complexity of weaving tapestries fascinates me. It is a journey through color, form, and structure. In weaving tapestries my goal is to capture the essence of nature in an abstract way, creating movement through subtle blending of color. Living in both New Mexico and Minnesota, I am influenced by the starkness and beauty found in the New Mexican high deserts, as well as the serenity and lushness of the Minnesota lakes and wetlands. The beauty found in a desert mesa at sundown, a stretch of white sand against a dark sky or a mist rising from a still morning lake inspires me. It is these moments I want to capture on my loom.

I lived most of my life in Minneapolis and St. Paul, but upon retiring in 2003 I started wintering in New Mexico. I learned to weave when I moved to the remote and beautiful Magdalena Mountains of central New Mexico. I fell in love with everything weaving. My first weaving teacher not only taught me about weaving, but also about sheep ranching, lambing, shearing and wool processing.

I began weaving southwest style rugs on a Rio Grande style "walking loom," which is the traditional Spanish treadle loom introduced into New Mexico 400 years ago. My weaving was enhanced by time spent at my teacher's wool processing mill experimenting with fiber and creating yarn.

I was introduced to tapestry weaving by James Koehler, one of New Mexico's premier tapestry weavers. The five years with James as my teacher and mentor shaped my tapestry weaving.

The art of tapestry weaving is mastering the techniques of making images with yarn. I like weaving tapestries for many reasons: the feel of the soft fiber in my fingers; the meditative quality of moving the weft back and forth through the warp; the challenge of making all the choices in color, design, fiber, and technique to bring the image alive on the loom. Weaving for me is a journey of self-discovery and self-expression through color and form. When I create tapestries, I arrive at a deeper understanding of myself.

Unity Church was my spiritual home for almost two decades and I love coming home to this special place.

## Blood Drive at Unity Church

### Volunteers and Donors Needed

Six volunteers are needed to check in donors and monitor the canteen during our blood drive on Monday, September 19. Available shifts are 8:30-11:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and 1:00-3:00 p.m. If you are interested, please email Heidi Birkholz at [heidi@unityunitarian.org](mailto:heidi@unityunitarian.org).

Blood donation appointments are available from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on September 19. For an appointment, call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org) and enter UCUpaul to schedule an appointment.

## Join the Emergency Preparedness Team

Help the congregation be prepared for a variety of emergencies. If you are interested in reading the church's Emergency Action Plan and/or joining our Emergency Preparedness Team, please contact Barbara Hubbard at [barbara@unityunitarian.org](mailto:barbara@unityunitarian.org).

## Sing with a Choir!

Rehearsals for Unity Choir, Women's Ensemble, Unity Singers, Children's Choir, and Youth Choir all begin in September. Turn to page 15 for details and email [ahmed@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ahmed@unityunitarian.org) to get connected.

## Collect Water for Merging of Waters



Collect water from your summer travels, neighborhood lake, or backyard hose and then bring it to church for our merging of waters ritual on Sunday, September 11!

## Join a Welcome Team

Once a month, you and your team members help to nurture mutual belonging at Sunday services through tasks like greeting congregants, ushering, talking to people in Parish Hall, and connecting newcomers to more information about the church. Training and support provided! Interested? Email Madeline at [madeline@unityunitarian.org](mailto:madeline@unityunitarian.org).

## Teach Religious Education

Our Faith Formation team provides materials, lessons, and teacher gatherings to support you in teaching our children and youth as a spiritual practice. Contact Ray Hommeyer ([ray@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ray@unityunitarian.org)) for more information.

# MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



## Pitter-pattering Questions

[...like raindrops on the window, and little feet running through the house]

**Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation**

From concert halls to cathedrals, acoustic considerations require precise attention to the movements of sound along invisible paths of echoes and reverberations. In designing concert halls, the idea is not eliminating echoes but sculpting them for definition, timbre, clarity, dynamic range, dimension, envelopment, and silence. An acoustic space with too much echo sounds cluttered and unclear, as echoing interferes with new sounds. Yet a hall without any echo sounds muffled and lifeless. Concert halls typically have a reverberation time of two seconds, while cathedrals may reverberate for up to eight seconds for a less clear but more mellow and resonant sound. But whatever the space, echoes give it voice and tonal character, layering sound into song into communication into meaning. Where there is no echo, our felt sense of space, both physical and relational, becomes thin and almost indiscernible.

The word used by the early church for the faith formation of children, *catechesis*, has at its core the Greek *ekhē* meaning “to echo.” The early church understood catechesis as echoing the church’s teachings for children, so that it would echo back in the way children moved through the world; catechesis as a sort of echolocation for their faith journey. But what exactly is echoed in our own catechism with children, given no doctrine, no single authoritative text, and the non-creedal nature of Unitarian Universalist faith? Yes, the history and tradition set by remarkable forebears of the faith. Yes, the *Principles* and *Sources* that shape and guide the journey. But even beyond these and other defining matters, what echoes at the heart of our catechism is something more remarkable, demanding, and daring: that elusive and peculiar “way of being” called *covenant*. Our covenant is our catechism, our shared promises that describe the kind of faith community we aspire to be.

Covenants elude simple definitions, known really only in practice with one another, together over time, in varied settings better and worse, undergirding the communal and relational quality of our inescapable life together. Perhaps most outrageous of all, the question for those entering into a covenant is *not* whether you know what you are promising, but whether you are the kind of person who can be held to a promise made when you did not know what you were promising. How foolhardy or audacious is that?!

As another church year begins for our children and families, I think about our remarkable teachers who embody that covenant year after year, a catechism that will echo in our children’s lives as they make their way in our beautiful and precarious world. The promises we make, knowing precisely what we are promising, can only achieve what we know. Who would disparage that? But to step beyond into the immensity and promise of their birthright, our children require nothing less than a catechism that everywhere echoes our sacred covenant — an unconditional love and unshakable belonging, discernible even there in the cosmic echoes from the big bang itself. Whatever else would be worth covenanting?

*Sharing questions that pitter-patter across our sacred journeys...*

## Religious Education

Religious Education classes begin on September 18. If you would like to enroll your child, please email Ray Ann Hommeyer at [ray@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ray@unityunitarian.org).

Summer in the Garden was a lot of fun! Enjoy these pictures by Kim Wolston of another fantastic growing and learning season.



# MUSIC MINISTRY

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## Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa

Director of Music Ministries



As we start a new church year, I'd like to invite everyone at Unity Church to participate in the music ministry.

There are plenty of opportunities throughout the year to play a musical instrument or sing. We also have hymn singing and discussions on Zoom every two weeks for those that cannot participate in person. Of course, Unity Church has a long history of outstanding choral singing as an integral part of Sunday worship and for creating connections within, among, and beyond our community. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to join a choir at Unity Church! Membership is free and open to everyone — including people outside of Unity's congregation. However, all members of Unity's adult choirs must commit to singing at Sunday worship services when required and to honor Unity's values, mission, and ends statements.

Unity has three adult choirs that sing in worship: Unity Singers, Unity Choir, and Women's Ensemble. See the detailed information about these ensembles on this page and on our website. Additionally, Unity houses the Twin Cities chapter of Threshold Choir, which specializes in singing at bedsides for people undergoing severe illness or at the end of life. We also have the Youth Choir and Children's Choir, both meant to create an environment where spirituality and music are connected from an early age. In addition to singing in worship, the choirs at Unity participate in several musical events throughout the year, collaborate with a variety of visiting artists, and are an integral part of the congregational culture and community.

## Sing with a Choir

Rehearsals begin in September. Email [ahmed@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ahmed@unityunitarian.org) to get connected.

### Unity Choir • Rehearsal: Thursdays, 7:30-9:15 p.m., Parish Hall

Unity Choir is a large choral ensemble (typically between 60 and 80 voices) and is the strong component on which Unity's choral program is built; a vital and energetic presence in our community. Its members share various levels of musical experience and a wide variety of activities and interests, all of which are brought together by their love of singing, music, and community. New members interested in applying will have a brief interview with the director and will be asked to sing a few vocalises ("warm-up" sequences) and short tonal memory exercises, so that the director can get a more thorough understanding of their background, vocal range, and vocal tone.

### Women's Ensemble • Rehearsals: Sundays, 10:15-10:50 a.m., Foote Room

Women's Ensemble is a continually growing and evolving group (typically between 40 and 60 voices) that emerged organically at a Women's retreat at Unity Church. These singers meet for only a half-hour each Sunday morning and to this short rehearsal time they bring tremendous creative energy, commitment, and joy! While this group emerged and continues to function as a space that supports and empowers women, all soprano and alto singers are encouraged to apply for Unity's Women's Ensemble, including transfeminine, transmasculine, and non-binary as well as cis male sopranos and altos. New members interested in applying will have a brief interview with the director and will be asked to sing a few vocalises ("warm-up" sequences) and short tonal memory exercises, so that the director can get a more thorough understanding of their background, vocal range, and vocal tone.

### Unity Singers • Rehearsals: Tuesdays, 7:30-9:15 p.m., Foote Room

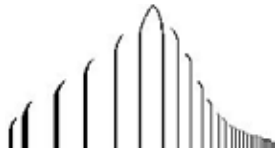
Unity Singers is Unity's auditioned, chamber choral ensemble (typically between 20 and 28 voices.) Each singer's involvement is built on a passion for singing and for ministry through music. This ensemble has an outstanding trajectory of representing Unitarian Universalist music locally and abroad through many commissions and premieres of music by world-renowned composers, professionally-produced recording projects, collaborations with other ensembles and community organizations, and multiple appearances at conventions of the American Choral Directors Association. Due to the requirement for independent learning and the pace of rehearsal and performance, membership in Unity Singers requires a yearly audition, scheduled individually with the director.

### Children's Choir • Rehearsals: Sundays, 10:15 - 10:55 a.m., Choir Room

Unity Children's choir is a vibrant group of singers comprised of children from grades one through five. Rehearsal activities are focused on hands-on music making. In addition to singing the children experience music through movement, games, playing instruments, reading music and learning about the elements of music. No prior experience is required to join the choir. For more information contact Kathleen Radspinner, Children's Choir Director, at [kathleenr395@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenr395@gmail.com).

### Youth Choir • Rehearsals: Sundays, 10:15-10:55 a.m., Ames Chapel

Unity's Youth Choir for grades 6-9 builds on the Children's Choir and responds to the interest and musical skills of Unity's youth and families. Youth Choir is a primarily-vocal group also welcoming instrumentalists to join in the ensemble. If you're too old for Children's Choir and miss it, if you've noticed how connected music is to your spirituality, and/or if it just feels good to sing, Youth Choir is for you! No prior musical experience necessary. For more information contact Laura Potratz, Youth Choir Coordinator, at [lauramusic@unityunitarian.org](mailto:lauramusic@unityunitarian.org).



# UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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MATERIAL**

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

## *Attention, Art Lovers...*

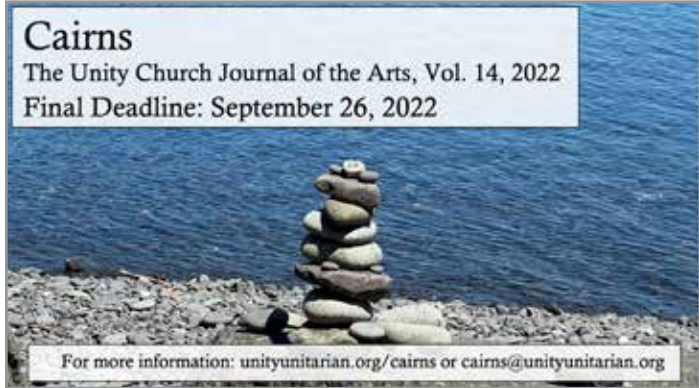
-  Does art excite and inspire you?
-  Do you enjoy the monthly art exhibits in the Parish Hall?
-  Did you know that Unity's Art Team is responsible for the Parish Hall exhibits?

Learn more about the Art Team today — and consider joining us!  
[artteam@unityunitarian.org](mailto:artteam@unityunitarian.org)



*The Art Team needs you to help keep art alive and vibrant at Unity!*

**Cairns**  
The Unity Church Journal of the Arts, Vol. 14, 2022  
Final Deadline: September 26, 2022



For more information: [unityunitarian.org/cairns](http://unityunitarian.org/cairns) or [cairns@unityunitarian.org](mailto:cairns@unityunitarian.org)



Just one pint, saves three lives.

**American Red Cross Blood Drive**  
**Monday, September 19**

**9AM - 3PM**  
**Parish Hall**

SIGN UP ONLINE  
[www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)  
Sponsor Code: UCUsstpaul